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Expand DMH's Mobile Crisis Response Teams to 24/7

On June 8, 2021, the Los Angeles County (County) Board of Supervisors (Board) unanimously approved a motion directing the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to report back with a plan to expand the County's alternative crisis response (ACR) system. The report back, "Expanding Alternative Crisis Response in LA County" (Report), lays out recommended steps for expanding the County's mobile crisis response to provide around-the-clock unarmed responses to individuals experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis.

The recommended plan includes restructuring DMH's staffing model such that individuals with prior lived experience (e.g., a history of a mental health diagnosis and/or episodes of homelessness and/or justice involvement; aka "a peer") would be assigned to response teams alongside clinicians. Bringing peers to work alongside existing clinicians will help DMH achieve the other recommended steps laid out in the plan, like increasing the total number of teams to decrease the average response time, expanding hours to run 24/7/365 like other health and public safety emergency response systems, and establishing unified standards and procedures for triaging calls to the appropriate

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destinations. Additional plans include contracting with community-based organizations to provide Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams (MCOT's) on a 24/7/365 basis. These proposed changes will enhance and expand the County's alternative crisis response system, helping individuals in crisis get the help they need when, where, and from whom they need it and reducing our overall reliance on law enforcement.

Although the Report does not identify a concrete timeline for these expansion efforts, it does point to the launch of 9-8-8 as the national number for suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotlines as an important milestone. 9-8-8 is scheduled to launch nationally in July 2022 and will provide all LA County residents a simple three-digit number to call when they are in a mental health crisis. The County is preparing for this number to launch and has identified \$10 million of AB 109 funds to build up the call center capacity across the County including associated infrastructure/staffing needed to properly triage all 9-8-8 calls. In addition, the State will be releasing \$20 million of one-time funds to support 9-8-8 call center capacity statewide.

But we also need to make sure that services are available to respond with increased 24/7/365 capacity by the time 9-8-8 goes live. To support PMRT and MCOT expansion, the County has identified various one-time funds, including \$18.5 million of American Rescue Plan funds and an additional \$20 million of AB 109 funds. While the need for ongoing funding remains, there are a few promising potential options on the horizon. For example, the Mental Health Crisis Hotline Bill (AB 988) was introduced into the State legislature last year and in its current form, it includes a telephone surcharge that can be used for local alternative crisis response. Additionally, the American Rescue Plan Act includes an increased federal Medicaid match for crisis response from 50% to 85% for at least the next three years, though we are still awaiting confirmation of when this increased benefit will start. And at the local level, the County's Care First Community

Investment Committee will be considering the option of including PMRT services as a recipient of ongoing funds in their upcoming meetings.

Given the approaching launch date of 9-8-8 along with the one-time funding for associated call center infrastructure and various short term funding sources identified to support the expansion of LA County's alternative crisis response network as well as longer term funding options on the horizon, the County is in a strong position to expand DMH's mobile crisis response teams to 24/7/365 as laid out in the Report.

WE, THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to do the following:
 - a. Implement the expansion to 24/7/365 of as many DMH mobile crisis response teams as possible per the October 6, 2021, report back "Expanding Alternative Crisis Response in LA County" prior to summer 2022 when 9-8-8 is scheduled to go live as the national number for suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotlines;
 - b. Explore the feasibility and map proposed plans for establishing a public-facing dashboard with key Alternative Crisis Response (ACR) metrics, in collaboration with Chief Executive Office - Chief Information Office and Alternatives to Incarceration Initiative; and
 - c. Report back on the above in the next quarterly ACR report.
2. Direct the Chief Executive Office, in collaboration with DMH, to explore the feasibility of establishing a permanent ACR unit within the County to coordinate and oversee the role of relevant Health and Human Service Crisis Response teams/services, including both PMRT and EMS, as part of the County's efforts to establish a robust and well-coordinated ACR system and report back in the next quarterly ACR report.

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